



Best of Japan

Classic Tour | 18 Days | Physical Level 1

TOKYO – HAKONE - NAGANO - TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA
- KYOTO – HIROSHIMA – OSAKA

Our most extensive tour of Japan includes all the classic sights and key cultural activities. Featuring modern cities, historical sights, and beautiful landscapes Best of Japan ensures you get the most out of your trip to this fascinating land.

- Discover delightful Kyoto & Nara
- Feel the rush of Tokyo & Osaka
- Reflect in Hiroshima & Miyajima
- Admire beautiful Mount Fuji
- Search for the Snow Monkeys
- Take time to reflect in Hiroshima & Miyajima
- Experience the speedy bullet train

To book call 0800 936 3998 or visit your local travel agent

Visit wendywutours.co.nz

TOUR MAP



BEST OF JAPAN TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (From Dinner on day 1 to breakfast on the last day)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking National Escorts
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Comprehensive travel guides
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only thing you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Japan on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you will travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

Our tours come with a physical rating to guide you in selecting a holiday that suits your comfort level. Joining any of our tours involves independent mobility and the ability to stay active throughout the day, which is essential for fully enjoying the unique charm of each destination.

‘Best of Japan’ falls under a Physical Level 1 category. This indicates a level of fitness that allows you to comfortably remain on your feet with occasional rest. Expect to effortlessly navigate boarding and disembarking from various modes of transport, including coaches, trains, and boats. You'll be walking around remarkable sites and ascending steps to capture those awe-inspiring views!

Sightseeing may often involve walking for a reasonable duration, sometimes over multiple steps, or uneven surfaces. You will also be required to get on and off the boat in Tokyo Bay without assistance.

Our National Escort is dedicated to providing a high level of service and support throughout your journey. However, their primary role is to manage the daily aspects of the tour. They are unable to offer extensive personal physical assistance. We kindly ask our travellers to be prepared for the physical aspects of the tour to ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience for everyone.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

For travellers that have booked a ‘Land Only’ tour with no international flights, please note the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if you are arriving on the start and departing on the conclusion date of your tour, or when booking pre/post night accommodation with Wendy Wu Tours.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Tokyo (arrive into either Tokyo Narita or Tokyo Haneda airport) and end the tour on Day 17 in Osaka (departures from either Osaka Kansai or Osaka Itami airport). Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure. An informal Welcome Dinner will be held on Day 2 of the itinerary. If you miss this due to your arrival time, all information will be provided to you at breakfast the following morning.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It's our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we'll make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1-2 Tokyo**Meals: D**

Fly to the ultimate 24-hour city of Tokyo, Japan's capital city. On arrival, you will be met by an English-speaking representative and transfer approximately 1 and a half hours to your hotel. There will be Japanese Bento waiting for you at the hotel!

Please note: Early check-in is not included. If your flight arrives in the morning and you wish to arrange this, please speak to your reservation's consultant. You will be transferred by shared coach with other passengers who are not part of a Wendy Wu Tour. If you are on a shared bus transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to your hotel. Transfers will differ depending on group size.

**Destination Information**

Tokyo – One of the world's most cutting-edge capital cities, Tokyo is a city of contrasts, famous for its neon lit landscape, towering skyscrapers, peaceful shrines and lovingly tended gardens. Although long the political and cultural centre of Japan, Tokyo became the official capital when the Meiji Emperor moved it to Tokyo in 1867.

Day 3: Discover Tokyo**Meals: B, L, D**

Start your morning with a stroll in the beautiful Imperial Palace East Garden (you will not enter the palace itself) Home of the imperial Japanese family.

Visit Meiji Shrine, one of the most famous Shinto shrines in Japan and dedicated to the deified spirits of the former Emperor and his wife. Enter through the 12-metre-high Torii gate into the tranquil grounds, where you will wash your hands as per Shinto ritual of cleansing before entering this sacred space.



After lunch, head to the fashionable district of Shibuya and walk on the world's most famous pedestrian crossing.

Enjoy some free time, before transferring to the pier for your dinner cruise on Tokyo Bay onboard a traditional yakata boat.

You will be on your feet for approximately 4-5 hours during your touring in Tokyo. You will need to get on and off your boat this evening without assistance.

Destination Information

Imperial Palace East Gardens – The Imperial Palace East Gardens are part of the Imperial Palace, the main residence of the Emperor of Japan and the former site of Edo Castle.

Meiji Shrine – Meiji Shrine is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the Emperor Meiji and his wife Empress Shoken. The shrine is located in an evergreen forest within in the busy city and consists of 120,000 trees which were donated by people from all over Japan when the shrine was established.

Day 4: Tokyo

Meals: B, L, D

This morning take a stroll to Asakusa which was the entertainment district in the Edo era but lost its role in the modern era. Now, it is home to charming shops and restaurants, not to mention the oldest temple in the city, Sensoji.

Enter this 7th Century Buddhist temple by passing through the Thunder Gate, indicated by a massive red lantern. Walk along Nakamise Street, a centuries-old souvenir street, do some shopping for that perfect souvenir or pick up a local delicacy as there's plenty of scrumptious snacks too.



Due to the limited coach parking, you may need to walk around 15 minutes on flat road.

Continue your day with an incredible panorama of the city, view the Tokyo Skytree. With a height of 634m, it is the tallest free-standing broadcasting tower in the world. Take in the landscape of the city you've come to explore, before heading back to your hotel.

You will be on your feet for approximately 3-4 hours during your touring in Tokyo.

Destination Information

Asakusa – Asakusa is the centre of Tokyo's Shitamachi (Old Town) District, where you can get a glimpse of historical Tokyo.

Senso-ji Temple – Sensoji Temple is an ancient Buddhist Temple and the oldest in Tokyo. The temple was originally founded in the 7th century. The temple adorns an image of the Buddhist Goddess Kannon, who was said to have been rescued by two fishermen from the Sumida River in Tokyo.

Tokyo Skytree – The tallest structure in Japan, Tokyo Skytree is predominantly a television and radio broadcast tower and is earthquake-resistant.

Day 5: Tokyo – Hakone – Mt Fuji**Meals: B, L, D**

After breakfast depart Tokyo and head to Hakone, a drive of around 2 hours. Throughout the day you will have a chance to take a glimpse at this awe-inspiring Mt. Fuji, but please bear in mind that it needs to be a clear day.

Start your Hakone adventure on a pirate ship and sail across Lake Ashi. A crater formed by a volcano nearly three-thousand years ago, these charming waters offer beautiful views of the enveloping mountains and even Mt. Fuji on a clear day.



Enjoy some lunch before taking the Hakone Ropeway from Togendai station to Owakudani, the Great Boiling Valley. Watch the steam rising from the mountain, as thermal water grazes just under the rocky façade at extraordinarily hot temperatures.

Stop amongst the steamy rocks and see if you can spot Mt. Fuji in the distance before trying kuro-tamago, or a black egg. Boiled in the sulfuric hot springs each egg turns black as its cooked; it's rumored that eating it will add several years to your life.

You will be on your feet for approximately 2-3 hours today.

Please note - There is a possibility that due to the Volcanic smoke, the Hakone ropeway would be suspended. If that happens, after the shrine, Hakone Ropeway and Owakudani will be replaced with Hakone Shrine and Komagatake Ropeway.

Destination Information

Lake Ashi – Formed after Mount Hakone's last eruption 3000 years ago, Lake Ashi is the symbol of Hakone and on a clear day offers spectacular views of Mount Fuji in the distance.

Hakone Ropeway – The Hakone Ropeway allows visitors to take in spectacular views of the crystal-clear blue waters of Lake Ashi, the rising volcanic fumes of Owakudani and the grandeur of Mount Fuji on a fine, sunny day.

Owakudani Valley – also known as the 'Great Boiling Valley', watch the steam rising from the mountains as thermal water passes underneath the rocky surface at extraordinarily high temperatures. The area is also famous for its black egg which is cooked in the sulfuric hot springs.

Day 6: Mt Fuji - Nagano**Meals: B, L, D**

Head up Fuji's 5th Station for spectacular mountain vistas, please note it is only possible to reach the 5th station if weather permits.

If the 5th Station is closed, the Fuji San World Heritage Centre (formerly Fuji Visitor Centre) will be visited instead. Also visit Itchiku Kubota Art Museum to view the elaborate dyed silk creations of artist Kubota Itchiku. Continue by road to Nagano, a journey of 2.5 hours.

You will be on your feet for approximately 2-3 hours today.

**Destination Information**

Fuji Five Lakes – Formed by previous Mount Fuji eruptions, the Fuji Five Lakes is a region at the base of Mount Fuji made up of five beautiful lakes.

Mt Fuji – At 3,776m, Mount Fuji is the highest of Japan's mountains and an iconic symbol of the country. Mount Fuji is notoriously shy and is often enveloped by clouds.

Itchiku Kubota Art Museum – Kubota Itchiku revived the lost art of Tsujigahana silk dyeing, used to decorate elaborate kimono during the Muromachi Period (1333-1573). The museum exhibits several of his kimono creations, while the extensive gardens, designed by Kubota Itchiku himself, are also worth a stroll.

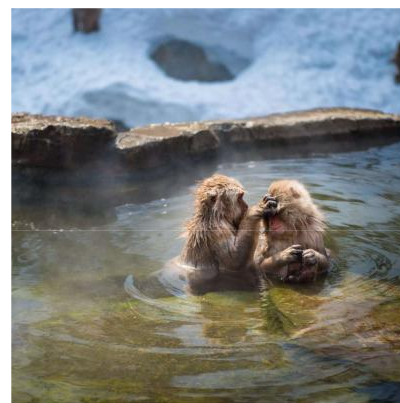
Nagano – The host city of the 1998 Winter Olympics, Nagano is the main access point for the Japanese Alps.

Day 7: Jigokudani Monkey Park**Meals: B, L, D**

This morning Visit Jigokudani Yaen-Koen Monkey Park in of search of the snow monkeys (Japanese Macques).

Be prepared to do some light hiking, there is around a 30-minute walk through the forested valley along paths, occasionally on an incline, from the bus park to the main pool where the monkeys bathe.

Accustomed to humans, the monkeys can be observed up-close, and they almost completely ignore their human guests. Please keep in mind that the snow monkeys are wild, not domestic animals and sighting them is never guaranteed, particularly during the breeding season which runs from late September through to November.



At the end of the hike, enjoy lunch, before continuing to the Zenkoji Temple. The first Buddhist statue that was brought into Japan is stored in the temple making it one of the most popular and important temples in Japan.

You will be on your feet for approximately 3-4 hours today. Return to Nagano.

Please note: Please wear comfortable clothes, since there will be some light hiking/walking up to the monkey park.

Destination Information

Jigokudani Yaen-Koen – Home to Japanese Macaques, also known as Snow Monkeys, Jigokudani literally means ‘hell’s valley’. It is named this because of the steam and boiling water that bubbles out of small crevices in the ground. It is in the baths of this hot water that the resident Japanese Macaques like to soak. The monkeys live in large social groups, and it can be quite entertaining to watch their interactions.

Zenkoji Temple – Built in the 7th Century, Zenkoji stores what many believe to be the first Buddhist statue brought to Japan. Zenkoji's main hall has a tunnel in its basement where visitors try to find and touch the ‘key to paradise’ in complete darkness. The key is attached to the wall and grants enlightenment to anybody who touches it.

Day 8: Nagano - Takayama

Meals: B, L, D

Start the day with a visit to the Daio Wasabi Farm and marvel at the unique wasabi-related statues and food. Learn all about wasabi, from how it is grown until it arrives on the table. Tour around the farm on a boat tour along the river in the farm.

Next, spend some time in the Ishii Miso House to learn more about world-famous Japanese seasoning, a staple in all Japanese household.



Finish up at the Matsumoto Castle, otherwise known as Black Crow Castle, one of only twelve original castles in Japan, its turret structure and characteristic black wainscoting, give off an air of grandeur and poise. The wooden interior is one of the very few not reconstructed in ferro-concrete, making it one of the most authentic experiences of feudal Japan.

You will have to remove your shoes before walking along some of the wooden floors and there are some steep wooden steps to reach certain areas. From the coach parking to castle, it is around 15 minutes walk on flat road. You will be on your feet for approximately 3-4 hours today. End the day relaxing in a rejuvenating hot spring in your hotel in Takayama.

Please note: Bring change of clothes just in case, there is a possibility of getting wet during the boat tour in Daio Wasabi farm. Matsumoto Castle can be difficult for older clients due to steep stairs and could be slippery at times.

Destination Information

Takayama – Boasting one of Japan’s most atmospheric townscapes, the layout of Takayama dates back to the 17th century and is home to much Meiji architecture.

Matsumoto Castle – Known as the crow castle due to its dark black exterior, Matsumoto Castle dates back to the 16th century and is the oldest wooden castle in Japan.

Ishii Miso – Ishii Miso was founded in 1868 and is still producing miso, an essential ingredient in Japanese cuisine, by a unique traditional method.

Wasabi Farm – The Daio wasabi farm, one of Japan's largest wasabi farms, has multiple large fields with a network of small streams that constantly provides clear water to each wasabi plant.

Day 9: Explore Takayama**Meals: B, L, D**

This morning visit the Miyagawa Open Air Market of Takayama. These markets sell local crafts, vegetables, and farm products and are always popular with locals, who go from stall to stall.

You will begin the day at a more recent market that started in the early 20th century, before making your way to the older market, originating in the early 1800s. Takayama's markets are a great example of traditional establishments surviving the pressure from large chains and stores. With both markets near the old town, it is a wonderful area to walk through, where you can sample some of the delicious food whilst admiring the architecture.



You will also visit the Yatai Kaikan, a place that displays traditional Japanese floats that are often used in festivals, and the Kusakabe Folk Crafts Museum along the way.

Your last stop is Takayama Jinya. This old provincial magistrate office is the only one in Japan with its main building remaining. It was used as a government office for nearly 300 years, until approximately 50 years ago.

You will be on your feet for approximately 4 hours today.

Destination Information

Miyagawa Morning Market – Occurring each morning, there are a number of stalls selling fresh vegetables, local craft works and local food products at the Miyagawa Morning Market.

Takayama Festival Floats Exhibition Hall – Housing floats from the Takayama Festival, which dates back to the 16th century, the Exhibition Hall is a great introduction to the cultural celebrations of Takayama.

Kusakabe Folk Crafts Museum – Kusakabe Folk Crafts Museum is a former house for a wealthy merchant named Kusakabe. The house is typical of the style during the Edo Period, with dark wooden beams and pillars.

Takayama Jinya – A former government office dating back to the Edo Period, Takayama Jinya is the only one of its type still remaining. The main work of the office was to handle legal cases and tax collection.

Day 10: Takayama - Kanazawa**Meals: B, L, D**

After breakfast enjoy a scenic drive through the picturesque countryside to the rural region of Shirakawago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site where you'll discover fascinating examples of old steep thatched roof houses. This unique architectural style, harmonized into the magnificent mountain landscape, was developed over 100 years ago to survive the harsh winters.

Stop by Wada House the largest traditional gassho-style house in the area and learn more about daily life in this remote area.



You will spend 1-2 hours on foot exploring the area. There are some stairs in the house if you want to explore the higher levels.

Proceed to the village of Gokayama where you'll enjoy a demonstration of traditional Japanese papermaking techniques. End the day with a visit to the Nomura Samurai House before heading to your hotel.

Destination Information

Kanazawa – Kanazawa is the capital of the Ishikawa Prefecture and is known for its beautiful samurai and geisha districts, as well as its stunning Kenroku-en Garden.

Shirakawago – Alongside Gokayama, Shirakawago is a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its unusual architectural style known as Gassho-Zukuri. The roofs of these houses are tilted at an almost vertical angle.

Nomura Samurai Family House – Nomura Samurai Family House is a restored Samurai residence with a beautiful garden. Nomura was a high-ranked samurai of the Meiji Period.

Day 11: Kanazawa - Kyoto**Meals: B, L, D**

This morning enjoy a visit to the beautiful Kenrokuen Garden, one of the finest gardens in Japan and marvel at the waterfalls, ponds and charming teahouses. Afterwards, head to Kyoto, a 4 hour drive.

Embodying Japan's rich culture and complex history, Kyoto has over 2000 temples and shrines, delightful gardens and exceptionally preserved wooden buildings. The sights, wonderful local cuisine and exceptional arts and crafts are certain to enchant you!



You will be on your feet for approximately 1-2 hours today.

Destination Information

Kenroku-en Garden – One of Japan's 'Three Great Gardens', Kenroku-en dates back to the early 17th century and is noticeable for its stunning beauty in all seasons.

Kyoto – Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan for approximately 1,000 years until 1867 when it was moved to Tokyo. Many national treasures can be found in Kyoto and in nearby Nara, including old shrines and temples, screen paintings, beautiful gardens, and statues of Buddha.

Day 12: Kyoto

Meals: B, L, D

Start the day with a guided tour exploring some of the city's highlights. We'll begin at the renowned Kiyomizu Temple, founded in the 8th century. Situated halfway up the Otowayama Hill it encompasses a vast area and affords stunning views of Kyoto.

Wander along the narrow winding alleys leading up to the temple, lined with magnificently preserved old houses, craftsmen's workshops and tea houses. Soak up the flavor of traditional Japanese atmosphere, and perhaps purchase some exquisite locally crafted souvenirs. You will spend 1.5 hours on foot exploring the temple.



Afterwards we'll enjoy a tea making and tea tasting experience where we'll learn more about the traditions surrounding tea in Japan.

Finish your day with Fushimi Inari, famous for its corridors of tori gates, as seen in the movie Memoirs of a Geisha. You will walk up part of the mountain and the incline allows a steady-paced walk around 15 minutes with flat road and steps to reach tori gates.

Due to the limited space of Fushimi Inari Shrine coach parking, you may need to walk from coach parking for 15 minutes. You will be on your feet for approximately 3-4 hours today.

Destination Information

Kiyomizu – Meaning 'Pure Water Temple', the 16th century Kiyomizu Temple is one of the most celebrated temples of Japan and houses the Jishu Shrine dedicated to the deity of love. A highlight is the Hondo's veranda which is perched over the hillside, offering spectacular woodland vistas.

Fushimi Inari Shrine (Taisha) – An important Shinto shrine in southern Kyoto, Fushimi Inari is most famous for its thousands of vermilion torii gates which form a network of tunnels around the main shrine buildings. The shrine itself is dedicated to Inari, the Shinto god of rice. There are many fox statues in the grounds of the shrine as foxes are thought to be Inari's messengers.

Day 13: Kyoto - Hiroshima**Meals: B, L, D**

Explore the former imperial capital of Japan, utilizing Kyoto's comprehensive bus system to visit some of the city's famous World Heritage Sites.

Start your day with a visit to Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) which was originally built as a retirement villa for the Shogun but, at his request, became a Buddhist Temple after his death.

Continue to Ryoanji, a Zen temple that boasts the most famous rock garden in Japan. Please note, you will be required to remove your shoes before entering this temple. Sightseeing on foot will be approximately 3-4 hours on foot today.

End your trip in Kyoto by hopping on the bullet train heading towards Hiroshima. a journey of 1 hour 40 minutes.

Please note: You will need to pack a smaller overnight bag for tonight as your main luggage will be transferred separately this morning to your Hiroshima hotel and arrive the next day.

Destination Information

Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion) – Kinkakuji Temple is a Buddhist temple and is an excellent example of Japanese garden design. The structure is a brilliant golden hue colour and is very minimalistic.

Ryoanji Temple – Ryoanji Temple is a Zen temple renowned for its garden, which features a dry, sand landscape with large rocks and smooth pebbles.

Hiroshima – An atomic bomb was dropped over Hiroshima on 6th August 1945, and the city's name became famous worldwide for this unenviable distinction. The destructive power obliterated nearly everything within a 2km radius. The city has been rebuilt and has risen phoenix-like from the ashes with destroyed sites of historical heritage reconstructed.

**Day 14: Explore Hiroshima****Meals: B, L, D**

Your guide will take you to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which is located at the centre of Hiroshima City.

The A-Bomb Dome, also known as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, is what remains of the former Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall. The building served as a location to promote Hiroshima's industries. When the bomb exploded, it was one of the few buildings to remain standing and remains so today. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the A-Bomb Dome is a tangible link to Hiroshima's unique past.



Please be aware that the museum may be confronting and upsetting for some group members and it is at your discretion if you wish to visit or enjoy time at leisure exploring the Peace Memorial Park.

Hop on board a boat and make your way to the historic and spiritual island of Miyajima. Explore the romantic location and listen to your guide share the fascinating background of the area. Behold Itsukushima Shrine and its floating Tori Gate, a treasured World Heritage Site, which emerges from the sea during high tide and can be seen close up at low tide. Miyajima is located less than an hour outside the city of Hiroshima.

Sightseeing on foot will be approximately 3-4 hours on foot today.

Destination Information

Peace Memorial Park and Museum – The Peace Memorial Park and Museum is one of the most prominent features of the city. The trees, lawns and walking paths are in stark contrast to the surrounding downtown area. Before the bomb, this area was the political and commercial heart of the city which is why it was chosen as the target. The museum focuses on the events of August 6th and the ensuing outcome for the residents.

Miyajima – Miyajima is a small island outside of Hiroshima. While officially named Itsukushima, the island is more commonly referred to as Miyajima, meaning 'Shrine Island'. This is because the island is well-known for its main attraction, Itsukushima Shrine, a giant torii gate, which at high tide seems to float on the water.

Day 15: Hiroshima - Osaka

Meals: B, L, D

Journey around 1 and a half hours by coach to Himeji and explore the magnificent 17th Century Himeji Castle and the neighbouring Koko-en, a traditional-style garden. The castle is largely in its original condition, so please be mindful of your step when strolling around.

You will have to remove your shoes before walking along some of the wooden floors and there are some steep wooden steps to reach certain areas. You will be on your feet for 3-3.5 hours during the visit.



After the reopening in March 2015, Himeji Castle has welcomed a large number of visitors. As such, they now issue numbered tickets to visitors in order to limit the number of people who can enter the Main Keep, reducing congestion, waiting time, and to protect the cultural properties. Please note that this means that there may be cases where some visitors are not allowed to enter the Main Keep. Also take a leisurely stroll through Kokoen Garden.

Later, transfer approximately 1.5 hours to Osaka for your overnight stay.

Please note: There will be a substantial amount of walking today, including a large number of steps.

Destination Information

Himeji Castle – Widely considered Japan’s most magnificent castle for its imposing size and beauty, the well-preserved Himeji castle is both a national and world heritage listed treasure. Himeji Castle has never been destroyed by war, earthquake or fire and survives to this day as one of the country's twelve original castles.

Koko-en Garden – Koko-en is a Japanese style garden consisting of nine separate, walled gardens designed in various styles of the Edo Period.

Osaka – Osaka, formerly known as Naniwa, is Japan’s third largest city and remains the economic powerhouse of the Kansai Region. The city is famed for its delicious food and is often referred to as the culinary capital. The city also boasts vibrant colours that surround each street, rich history and culture.

Day 16: Explore Nara & Osaka

Meals: B, L, D

Today travel outside Kyoto to Nara, Japan’s first capital and symbol of tranquility. Here, see the Todai-ji Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the world’s largest wooden structures with the bronze Great Buddha, also the Kasuga Taisha Shrine surrounded by 3000 stone and bronze lanterns, and the nearby Deer Park where deer are thought to be the shrine messengers.



Visit the Isuien Garden - sightseeing here will be about 3 hours on foot. Later, head back to Osaka for lunch in Dotonbori, a large scale downtown along the south bank of the Dotonbori-gawa Canal. Famous for its restaurants, it’s a great place to try the local specialties of Osaka.

Next, head on to your last stop of the trip. Osaka Castle was built in 1583 as the intended capital of Japan before the capital was moved to Edo (now known as Tokyo). It is now a symbol of Osaka. Please note that in order to reach the castle there is a 15 minute walk from the coach parking on flat road.

Destination Information

Nara – Due to Nara’s past as the first permanent capital, it remains full of historic treasures, including 8 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Todaiji Temple – A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Todaiji Temple is one of the Seven Great Temples of Japan and is home to the world’s largest bronze statue, Daibutsu.

Isui-en Garden – Isui-en is an attractive Japanese garden divided into two parts, a front garden and a rear garden, with a number of tea houses scattered throughout. The front garden dates back to the mid-17th century, while the rear garden, the larger of the two, was built in 1899 by a wealthy merchant.

Osaka Castle – Osaka Castle is one of Japan's most famous castles known for sweeping views of the city from its hilltop perch. Construction began in 1583 under Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who intended that the castle become the centre of a new, unified Japan under his rule.

Dotonbori District – Historically a theatre district and still a popular entertainment area today, the Dotonbori district offer an eccentric and electric atmosphere.

Day 17 - 18: Depart Osaka**Meals: B**

This morning is free at leisure before transferring to the Osaka airport for your return flight home.

Please note: Only breakfast is included today. Late check-out is not included in our Best of Japan tour. If you wish to book a late check-out for your final day in Osaka, please contact our reservations department who can confirm the additional price and make this arrangement for you, subject to availability at the hotel.

Transfers: In the event that your flight departs outside of the majority group departure time, you will be transferred to the airport by a shared coach (not with other Wendy Wu Tours passengers). If you are on a shared coach transfer, you may have to walk for a few minutes to get to the coach.



JAPAN - TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

Visas are not required for New Zealand passport holders for entry into Japan for stays of up to 90 days. Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back into New Zealand.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original

EATING IN JAPAN:

Japanese cuisine is delicious, colourful and healthy. Meals are usually served with a bowl of rice and a bowl of miso soup and consist usually of fish, pickled vegetables and meat. Japan's other main staple is noodles, most famous being Udon and Soba. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from the groups' arrival until the day of departure.

Our schedule of meals is designed so that you can experience the local dishes, their individual flavours as well as the different ways they are prepared and cooked throughout Japan. Food is an important element of Japanese culture. It is a time for families and friends to come together and much of family life revolves around the dinner table. Most food is eaten with chopsticks so best get practicing as cutlery is not always available at restaurants.

Breakfast will mostly be buffet style but may be a set-menu. Lunches are mostly pre-set options as is custom in many local restaurants. Dinner is usually buffet-style, featuring a wide selection of high-quality Japanese and Western dishes, but may occasionally be a set-menu. We usually find this style of dining suits the wide and varied tastes of our customers on tour. These are also pre-booked in advance prior to your arrival by your guides. This will provide greater flexibility and allow you to sample a broad range of local cuisines and dishes.

All beverages will be at your own expense and are readily available. Please note: if you have any dietary requirements, you must inform us before your tour starts, and please be aware that restaurants may not always be able to accommodate these. Gluten-free food may not be as readily available as in New Zealand.

On some days where lots of sights are covered, dinner times may be early, and your tour group may head directly to the restaurant after sightseeing without stopping at your hotel to freshen up.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. In the Fuji area, hotels tend to be more traditional in style and culture. In this area, you may be asked to take your shoes off at the door and store them in a secure locker – this is very traditional Japanese culture.

Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between the New Zealand and Japan.

Please note that in Japan, hotel rooms and bathrooms are renowned for being small. Standard single rooms are usually smaller than a standard double or twin room, contain one small double bed (or one single bed), and are designed for one person to use.

All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Hotels in Japan often do not have porters and you will be required to carry your own luggage. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/local guide. Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standards meet your needs.

PORTERAGE:

Please be aware that portering is not included on our tours in Japan. You will therefore need to be able to handle your own luggage within the hotel and when using transportation like trains and coaches.

AIRPORT TRANSFERS:

As we offer our customers a variety of airlines to suit your needs, clients will arrive/depart in Japan at different times during the day. Depending on the number of customers arriving/departing on the same flight as yourself, the type of transfer to your hotel/airport will vary.

You will always be met on arrival by English-speaking staff and transferred all the way to your hotel either by:

- Direct shared bus (shared with other passengers, not just Wendy Wu Tours clients),
- Shared bus plus taxi from the nearest bus stop to the hotel (maximum 5 minutes' walk),
- Chartered coach (if there are more than 8 Wendy Wu Tours passengers arriving at the same time).

On the departure day, all passengers will be met by English-speaking staff at the hotel and transfer by one of the three ways as above. For those passengers using a shared bus or shared bus plus taxi to the airport, the guide services end when they drop you off at the bus stop, and you will need to check in at the airport on your own. If you have paid extra for a private transfer, the above does not apply.

You will meet your national escort at the welcome dinner or, if arriving late, the following morning after breakfast at the welcome meeting.

Please ensure your Wendy Wu Tours luggage tag is visible on your suitcase/hand luggage, as this may also assist your guide in identifying you.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in Japan are extremely well maintained and are comparatively smooth compared with the rest of Asia. Coaches and minibuses do not have onboard toilet facilities; however, frequent bathroom stops are made for passengers comfort.

Bullet trains: Second-class reserved seats are booked for our groups on bullet trains; there will be toilet facilities on board. Due to the limited space on bullet trains, a separate luggage transfer service will be arranged for all suitcases (1 case per person). You will need to pack a separate overnight bag to carry on the train as your suitcase will not arrive until the following day after a bullet train journey. Your guide will indicate when you will need to prepare for this throughout your tour.

DEVELOPMENT IN JAPAN:

Japan is a developed country and as such matches the west in modernity and technological advances. Japan is an extremely safe country and takes great responsibility in maintaining high safety standards.

GROUP SIZE:

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a national escort. There will usually be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). A national escort will accompany each group of 10 or more. However, at our discretion, we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so.

TIPPING POLICY:

Although tipping in Japan is not customary, if you feel you have received an excellent service, please feel free to tip your guide at your discretion.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCE:

Japanese society and culture are built on intricate social etiquette and customs. As foreigners, we are not expected to be knowledgeable about all etiquette, but it will make your time in Japan more enjoyable if you are respectful of local customs.

Some examples of scenarios you may encounter include removing your shoes and hats when entering a temple or house (some restaurants as well). You may be supplied with slippers at some places, but please come prepared with plenty of spare socks, and shoes that are easy to take off for the fairly regular occasions when they must be removed.

Your National Escort will advise you of some of these other customs at the beginning of your tour.

LUGGAGE:

All travellers are limited to two items of luggage each: a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of five kilograms. It is essential that your luggage is lockable.

PERSONAL EXPENSES AND OPTIONAL TOURINGS:

Personal Expense - You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you.

Optional Tours - May be offered in each city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available.

Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

CLIMBING STEPS:

Sightseeing at nearly all the palaces, fortresses and some temples involves climbing quite a number of steps. These palaces were built to provide defence against potential invaders so nearly all of them stand on top of a hill, while the interiors have layers of narrow hallways and steps to slow down the advance of enemies once they were inside. The steps tend to be quite large, not level and sometimes without handrails.

Buddhist temples or pagodas also tend to be built at an elevation, as this is the most auspicious position according to ancient beliefs. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside.

People with knee or hip injuries who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

We recommend that you contact either your Doctor or Health centre for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Safetravel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.

Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements.

You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice including a visa application form (if applicable), and a help sheet. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

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